

Statement of Position on Iraq by U.S. Representative Jerrold Nadler

Thursday, 26 September 2002

"With the publication this morning of the so-called "compromise resolution" on Iraq, it has become apparent that the Administration has no intention of altering its perilous course. This resolution is no compromise. It is, in all important respects, much like the original draft - a blank check on the model of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

I have, so far, refrained from public comment on the issue of Iraq, as I worked in Congress with other Democratic members to try to deflect the Administration's headlong rush into war. But, now, I have no choice but to speak out and urge an alternative course. Let me be clear, however. On Sept. 11, 2001 my district was attacked by terrorists. I take the potential threat of nuclear weapons in the hands of a hostile and aggressive group or nation very seriously. The question before Congress is not whether to protect America, but how best to do so.

My position is as follows:

- 1) Resorting to war should always be the last resort, not the first option.
- 2) When faced with a threat, that threat should be met, if at all possible, through the United Nations, in accordance with international law.
- 3) Saddam Hussein's conduct has shown reckless aggressiveness, hostility to the United States and to Israel, willingness to invade other countries without provocation, willingness to use chemical and biological weapons against civilian populations, and a relentless drive to obtain weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and the means to deliver them.
- 4) The acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iraq would pose, therefore, an intolerable threat to the United States and to world peace. This danger, while undeniably real, is not imminent, but probably a few years away.
- 5) Therefore, we should take prudent action to meet the threat, but action that does not, itself, threaten international peace and security.

The United States should seek a United Nations resolution providing for the immediate return to Iraq of United Nations arms inspection teams, and demanding that they be afforded unfettered, unlimited and unconditional access to all sites they deem necessary to complete their work of locating and destroying all chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, and their production facilities.

The UN resolution should authorize the use of military force only to the extent necessary to overcome any Iraqi attempts to interfere with the inspection teams.

Before they were ejected from Iraq, UN inspectors were able to destroy more weapons facilities and more weapons of mass destruction than coalition forces during the Gulf War. This proven, successful course of action needs to be fully utilized before we risk regional conflagration. I believe the Security Council would adopt a resolution embodying such a specific, limited approach, and that, working through the UN, and with other nations, the United States could participate

in successfully implementing it.

6) "Regime change" is not a legitimate purpose for the use of military force under international law. Moreover, such a purpose is extremely dangerous. Faced with a US that has announced its intention to destroy his regime, which means, in practical terms, to bring about his death, there would be nothing to deter Saddam Hussein from attacking Israel with chemical or biological weapons of perhaps devastating lethality. Israel might feel compelled to retaliate with nuclear weapons, and no one can calculate the course of escalation from there.

7) The President must not be handed a blank check, to use whatever force he deems necessary to achieve any goals he deems necessary.

It was my hope that by working with Congressional leaders, the Administration would come to accept this position as the more prudent course. Unfortunately, that now seems not to be the case. Therefore, I will do everything possible, publicly and privately, to work with my colleagues in Congress to deflect the Administration from the dangerous direction in which it appears to be heading."

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